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ABSTRACT

The work of Joseph Gusfield provides the framework for analyzing the two different perspectives taken by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) and Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) to combat teen pre[illegible]usfield first analyzed how the problem emerged and then [illegible]ed "ownership" of the problem. According to Gusfield, the perspective which an individual or organization takes on a problem directly affects how the problem will be defined and how its solution will be structured. First, PPFA is more concerned about the dissemination of information in order to facilitate teens in making informed choices about sexuality. Their fundamental purpose is to provide educational resources and counseling in addition to making contraceptives available to men and women. CDF, on the other hand, looks at teen pregnancy from the perspective of "children"--children that are born to teenage mothers and the mothers that the organization also refers to as children. CDF views the problem as one of consequences rather than choices. Second, although both organizations place primary importance on preventing the problem, each focuses on a different level of prevention. PPFA argues that the need of prevention measures must occur on a much larger, societal scale. Recently initiated campaigns by both organizations illustrate their different [illegible]erspectives in the areas of target audience, structure of message [illegible]and [illegible]means of information dissemination. (Five figures showing campaign posters are included.) (KEH)

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Children Having Children: New Arguments on an Old Problem

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Speech Communication Association
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Every day more than 3,000 teenage girls become pregnant, and 1,300 babies are born to adolescents. Five hundred teenagers have abortions, 26 girls age 13 and 14 have their first child, and 13 others who are 16 have their second child. Over the course of a year, one of every ten teenage girls becomes pregnant (Brozan, 1987). These startling statistics point to one of the most serious social problems facing Americans today - teen pregnancy. A 1985 Harris poll echoed this sentiment when it reported that [redacted] American adults regard teenage pregnancy as a serious national problem. In order to com[redacted] problem many organizations, both public and private, have initiated programs aimed at yo[redacted]n, women and their parents. Two of the most successful organizations are Children's D[redacted]und and Planned Parenthood Federation of America. Each one takes a unique perspective [redacted] social problem. The perspective which an individual or organization takes on a problem direc[redacted]ects how they will define it and structure its solution (Gustfield, 1981). This paper will use the work of Joseph Gusfield to provide the framework for the analyzing the different perspectives taken by Children's Defense Fund and Planned Parenthood Federation of America to combat the teen pregnancy problem. Let me begin by describing the components of the Gusfield article, then analyzing the tenets of the [redacted] pregnancy problem espoused by these two organizations.

Methodology

Joseph Gusfield provides an appropriate theoretical "methodology" (loosely defined here) for analyzing the social phenomenon of teen pregnancy. Although his 1981 book specifically deals with the drinking-driving problem, he suggests that the book's theories could be applied to other public problems as well. He contends:

> "this is a book of general ideas developed and expressed int he context of a particular subject matter and experience. The phenomenon constituting the public issue of alcohol and auto safety--the drinking-driving problem--is the occasion for creating a theoretical perspective with which to examine public problems." (Gusfield, 1981, p. 2).

He specifically identifies these areas of analysis: the structure of the problem; the ownership of the problem; and the responsibility for the problem.

The Emergence of a Social Problem

The first step in analyzing the structure of the problem involves looking at how the problem emerged. Gusfield (1981, p. 3) states, "Human problems do not spring up, full blown and announced, into the consciousness of bystanders. Even to recognize a situation as painful requires a system of categorizing and defining events." Kenneth Burke suggests that the way we "see" and label a problem or situation has a great deal to do with the way we will act on it. Teen pregnancy has been labeled many ways and those labels have showed a marked change in the past twenty or thirty years.

Teen pregnancy is certainly not a new phenomenon but it has only recently become a "public" problem. The teenage birth rate was actually higher in 1957 than it is today. It must be remembered, however, that the fifties were an era of early marriage, when nearly a quarter of 18 and 19-year-old females were wedded making most births connubial (Stengel, 1985). If an unwed teenager did become pregnant in those days they probably would either discreetly disappear through pregnancy or would be forced into marriage "with a shotgun." Teen pregnancy was primarily a private, moral issue. The term "illegitimate" was indicative of the stigma attached to those "irresponsible girls which lacked a good moral upbringing and got in trouble." It was not considered an economic issue because most teens did not keep their children. In the early sixties, 35% of children born to teens were given up for adoption, in contrast to only 5% which are given up for adoption today (Time, 1985). If the girl did decide to keep her baby it was often raised or at least financially supported by her parents. Teenage pregnancy did not become a legislative issue until the early 70's when the Supreme Court ruled on the legality of abortions. In fact, teen pregnancy was so closely linked with the hush topic of sex that it was rarely discussed in families much less on a public or legislative level. All this has

changed today. Teen pregnancy has raised numerous economic, moral, and political issues: the battle over abortion rights; contraceptives and the teenager's right to access them; sex education in schools; controversies about welfare programs; and the precarious state of the black family in America (Stengel, 1985). Teen pregnancy is no longer a private and individual situation, it has emerged into a full blown social problem.

Ownership of the Problem

Gusfield's second tenet for analyzing a social problem involves identifying "ownership" of the problem. He writes:

> There is a pattern to how issues and problems arise, emerge, and evidence a structure. At any specific moment all possible parties to the issue do not have equal abilities to influence the public; they do not possess the same degree or kind of authority to be legitimate sources of definition of the reality of the problem, or to assume legitimate power to regulate, control, and innovate solutions (p. 9).

Several organizations have claimed ownership over the problem. Two of the most notable are Children's Defense Fund and Planned Parenthood Federation of America. This is not to suggest that they are the only ones who have acted on the problem. The March of Dimes, Catholic Charities and numerous other family planning associations have programs which address the issue of teen pregnancy. These two organizations seem to be the largest and the most public, however. This section of the paper will compare the approaches each of these organizations takes to the teen pregnancy problem.

Planned Parenthood

Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) was founded as the American Birth Control League in 1921 by Margaret Sanger. It took its present name in 1942. The organization is headquartered in New York City but operates over 700 affiliates in more than 250 cities. They serve

more than 1,200,000 persons each year. While Planned Parenthood is primarily concerned with the problems in the United States they also stress the growing problem world-wide. In 1952 the International Planned Parenthood Federation was started to deal with the growing problem of family planning in developing countries. It's headquarters are in London. Planned Parenthood has been in Lincoln since 1970. It is one often family planning clinics in Nebraska and one of two Planned Parenthood organizations in the State. A pamphlet from Planned Parenthood explains their philosophy:

> "We believe in every person's right to information about birth control, and every person's right to available, affordable and confidential family planning. We are here because we believe: 1) Every child should be wanted, planned and cared for child; 2) The choice of whether to parent is a personal matter; 3) Every person needs the opportunity to understand human sexuality; and 4) the problem of overpopulation affects all of us.

Children's Defense Fund

Marian Wright Edelman is the founder of the Children's Defense Fund. She attended Yale Law School and was the first black woman admitted to the Mississippi bar. As a staff attorney for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, she was convinced she could achieve more as ad advocate than a litigant for the poor. Edelman moved to Washington, D.C. in 1968 and formed the Washington Research Project which focused on the needs and concerns of poor people. In 1973 she transformed this project into the Children's Defense Fund. From its meager beginning, CDF now operates with a staff of 80 people and a $4.6 million dollar budget (Williams, 1986). The organization produces over 2,000 pages of studies each year and sponsors an annual conference to increase public awareness of the causes and effects of teen pregnancy. A CDF pamphlet states their philosophy:

> Children's Defense Fund exists to provide a strong and effective voice for the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. Our goal is to educate the nation about the

needs of children and encourage preventive investment in children before they get sick, drop out of school, or get into trouble.

The statement of goals gives us the first indication of how each of these organizations sees the problem differently. Each claims ownership over different segments of the problem. It is clear that PPFA is more concerned about the dissemination of information in order to facilitate teens in making informed choices about their sexuality. Their fundamental purpose is to provide educational resources and counseling in addition to making contraceptives available to men and women. PPFA takes on the controversial issues which accompany any moral issue. They take a definite stand on abortion, birth control, and sex education believing the "end justifies the mean." They view the teen pregnancy problem as important enough to use all necessary means in order to prevent it.

Ultimately, Planned Parenthood labels the problem as one of choices - the choice to have sex or abstain, and the choice of whether or not to use contraceptive protection. Three pamphlets entitled, The Choice to Abstain, Teensex?, It's Okay to Say No, and Many Teens Are Saying No, stress the importance of choices in preventing pregnancy. In order to make informed choices, teens must have access to educational materials and counseling and this is the foundation of the Planned Parenthood organization. Sex is not the problem, and pregnancy is not the problem. There is only a problem if the decision to do so was not an informed choice. (Interview with Sue Alexander at Lincoln PPFA). Defining the problem in this way clearly calls for a solution which justifies education, contraception and abortion.

Children's Defense Fund, in contrast to Planned Parenthood, looks at teen pregnancy from the perspective of "children" -- children that are born to teenage mothers and the mothers that they also refer to as children. CDF views the problem as one of consequences rather than choices. A recent transit campaign utilized large posters with catchy slogans such as: "It's like being grounded for

eighteen years" and "the one on the left will finish high school before the one on the right." These two concepts make it clear that having a child will affect your education and future job prospects as well as your freedom. The message to teens tries to convince them that having a baby produces dire consequences that you must be ready to face. Children's Defense Fund emphasizes these consequences primarily in economic terms. Edelman writes in her latest book:

> "A teen parent who drops out of school earns half as much as in her lifetime as a woman who has her first child at 20 or later. A baby born to a young single mother is three times as likely to be poor as a baby born to a two-parent family (p. 52).

Seventy-one percent of females under 30 who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children had their first child as a teenager. "With disadvantage creating disadvantage, it is no wonder that teen pregnancy is widely viewed as the very hub of the U.S. poverty cycle" (Luedtke, p. 79). Defining the problem as one of economics justifies a legislative solution.

Responsibility for the Problem

The third aspect of the structure of public problems as identified by Gusfield is related to the responsibility of the problem. Gustfield explains that:

> "Ownership constitutes one piece of the structure of public problems. It indicates the power to define and describe the problem. It tells us who but not what: it does not specify the concept of description and solution (p. 13).

Gusfield further delineates responsibility into two subset ideas: causal and political responsibility. Causal responsibility is defined as "a matter of belief or cognition, an assertion about the sequence that factually accounts for the existence of the problem." Although both organizations seem to place primary importance on preventing the problem in the first place, each focuses on a different level of prevention. PPFA proports that the need for prevention must occur on the individual level. Thus, they attempt to

deal with the cause on the personal level by providing counseling and birth control. CDF works suggests the preventive measures must occur on a much larger, societal scale. One of their brochures states, "CDF is a unique organization. CDF focuses on programs and policies that affect large numbers of children rather than helping families on a case-by-case basis."

While these two organizations generally focus on different levels of causal responsibility, their specific campaigns seem to be quite similar. Recently both have initiated campaigns targeting specific groups they feel must take responsibility for the problem.

Childrens' Defense Fund Transit Campaign

In 1986 at its second annual National Conference on Adolescent Pregnancy, CDF unveiled a five year advertising campaign to decrease the incidence of teen pregnancy in this country. Part of the long range media blitz included a series of transit posters placed in public transportation in major cities throughout the United States. The campaign was unique for two reasons: first, in a television-oriented society, CDF chose to use a rather out-dated poster campaign where language and photos create the message and, 2) the target audience was not the teenage boy or girl directly responsible for the consequences of their sexual activity, but their parents. CDF justified this target audience because, "it's members are the parents and role models of today's adolescents which have the authority and resources to determine national priorities" (CDF, 1985). Furthermore, CDF believes the responsibility lies primarily with adults. "As adults, we are responsible for meeting the needs of children. It is our moral obligation. We brought about their births and their lives, and they cannot fend for themselves (Edelman, p. 53). This perspective is consistent with the CDF philosophy that the problem of teen pregnancy is one of "children having children." Because CDF views teens as youthful, innocent children it would follow that they do not need to bear the responsibility for their actions. Perhaps teen pregnancy is just another mistake expected of growing teens and their parents must bear ultimate responsibility for their

behavior. Thus, the CDF transit campaign appealed to the value system of parents, hoping to convince them to take action on this problem. The campaign posters addressed three specific values: 1) the importance of education and how teen pregnancy would diminish the chances of finishing high school; 2) the desirability of childhood freedom and; 3) the necessity of a bright future which is better than their parents. (See appendix A for examples of the posters.)

Planned Parenthood would disagree with the concept of assigning responsibility to the parents of teenagers. While they do encourage parents to communicate with their teens about sex and contraception, they know parents aren't doing the job. Planned Parenthood recognizes and substitutes for this lack of parental responsibility. Their programs remove the burden from parents and place it directly on the teenager themselves. However, they uniquely target both teenage boys and girls when trying to solve the problem.

Planned Parenthood's "Male Involvement" Campaign

The focus on the male role in teen pregnancy began at PPFA in April 1985. An entire section of the literature available from Planned Parenthood now focuses on males. The Lincoln affiliate wrote and received a grant in order to purchase books, films and other educational materials aimed at males. They also designed a pamphlet entitled, "Men, Your Sexuality is Worth Knowing About. Other pamphlets entitled, "A Man's Guide to Sexuality," "Ten Ridiculous Ideas That Will Make a Father Out of You," and, "Men and Contraception: A Shared Responsibility" are just a few of the materials available to men at PPFA. The purpose is blatantly clear - men must take responsibility for "defining sexuality, pregnancy prevention, and the pregnancy experience. (PPFA-Lincoln, 1986). Three themes are developed in this campaign. First, men must be knowledgeable of there own sexuality. Men have a right and a need to be taught about their own sexuality. PPFA does not assume that men know more about sex than women do. They also have a need for education and counseling. Second, men must play an active

role in using birth control methods. Men should not assume it is the female's responsibility to obtain birth control. In fact, PPFA urges men to take the initiative in this regard. According to Susan Alexander of the Lincoln Planned Parenthood Program, their program, "Condom Sense" was very successful in Lincoln high schools. Finally, males must communicate and be supportive of their partners - it should be a shared responsibility. This includes "making decisions about whether you want to be parents, when you want to be parents, if you want to make a commitment to use contraceptives, and what form of birth control is best for you. This campaign reiterates the importance of choices in the dealing with teen pregnancy problems.

The second aspect of responsibility Gusfield calls, "political responsibility, or a matter of policy." It asserts that somebody is obligated to do something about the problem (p. 14). Having identified the structure of the problem of teen pregnancy from the perspective of Planned Parenthood and Children's Defense Fund, it is easy to see how these two organizations differ on the solution to the problem. CDF believes that legislative changes are necessary to solve the problem. Edelman (1987) outlines six specific legislative goals: 1) Medicaid coverage must be extended to poor pregnant women and children under the age of five. 2) Money must be allocated to fund more Head Start programs. 3) A personal exemption, standard deduction and earned income tax credit must be given to the poor. 4) The minimum wage must be raised to $4.25 per hour to raise families out of poverty. 5) Adults must work to make the prevention of teen pregnancy a national priority. 6) Welfare reform is needed to get families out of the cycle of poverty.

Planned Parenthood calls for action on a more personal level. It provides extensive medical and educational services on an ability-to-pay basis. It suggests the solution lies with all of us. We have the responsibility to be informed about the issues in order to make informed choices. The organization operates a large volunteer and internship network. The ultimate solution is knowledge and it is on that

level that Planned Parenthood fights the problems.

Joseph Gusfield has provided us with a unique structure for examining a social problem. We have looked at the emergence of the problem, it's ownership, and to where we place the responsibility for solving the problem. Two organizations, Planned Parenthood Federation of America and Children's Defense Fund provide us two different windows from which to view the problem. Using Gusfield to guide us through the problem we have gained additional insight into this serious social problem which, Marian Wright Edelman suggests, "affects our most precious resource-children."

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FIGURE 1

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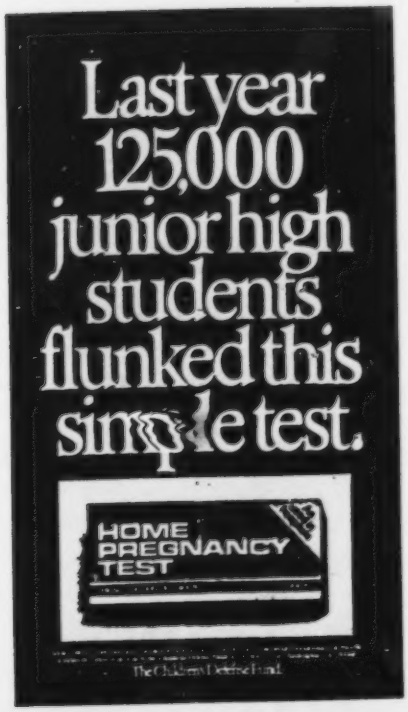
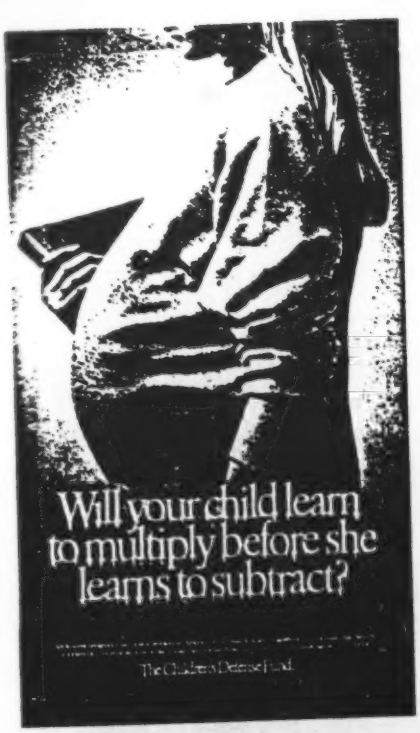
FIGURE 2

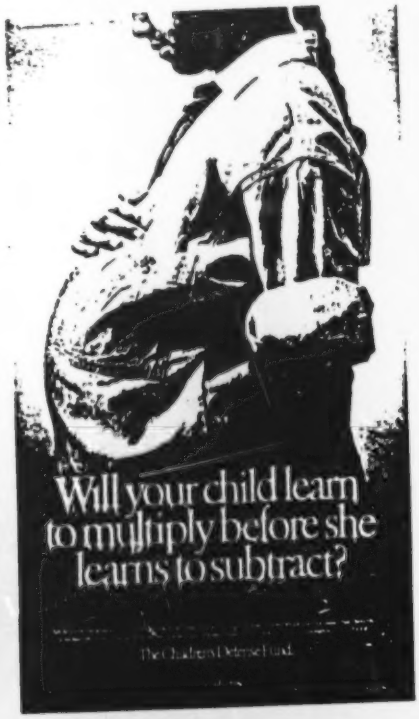

Last year 125,000 junior high students flunked this simple test.
HOME PREGNANCY TEST

It's like being grounded for eighteen years.

It's like being grounded for eighteen years.
The Children's Defense Fund

FIGURE 3

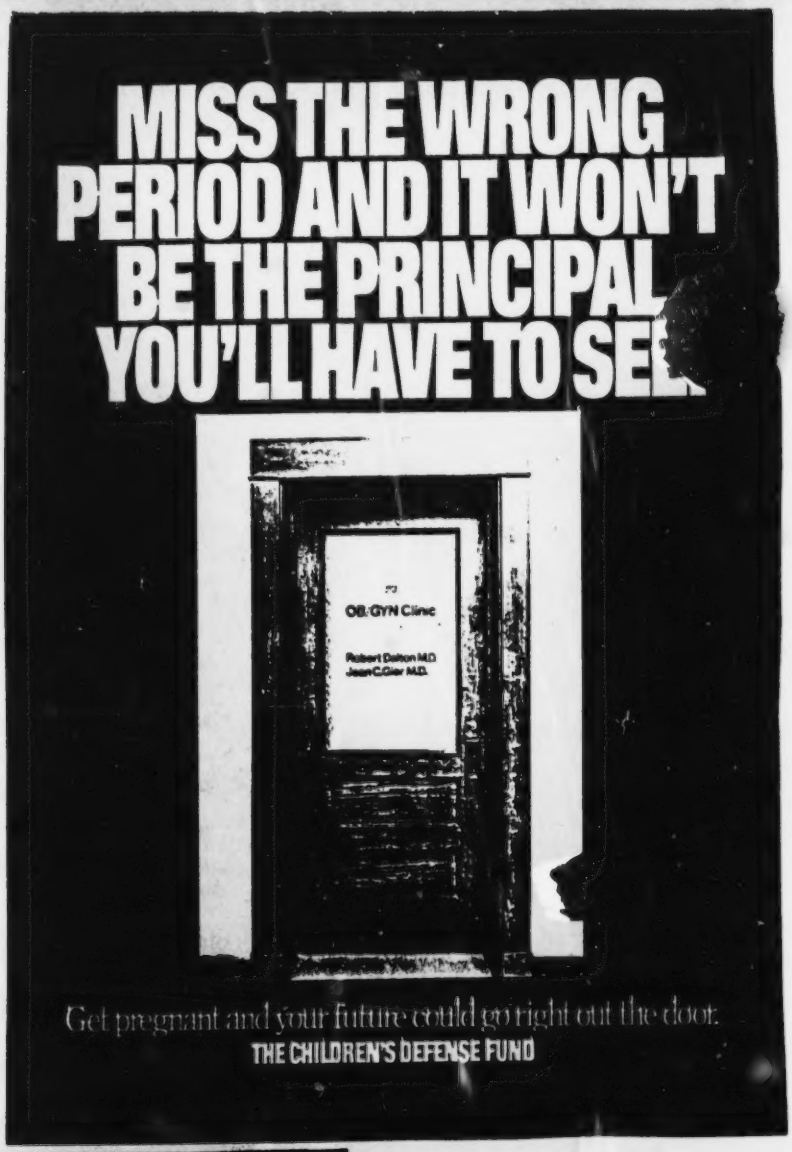

Will your child learn to multiply before she learns to subtract?
The Children's Defense Fund

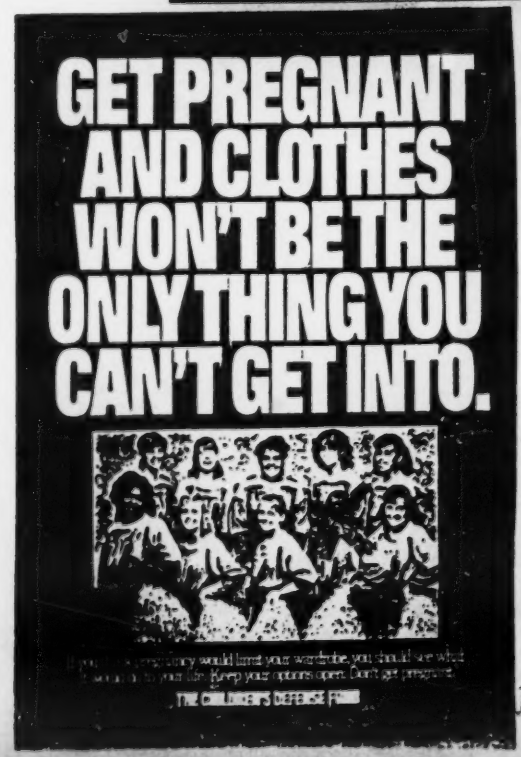

Will your child learn to multiply before she learns to subtract?
The Children's Defense Fund

The one on the left will finish high school before the one on the right.
The Children's Defense Fund

The one on the left will finish high school before the one on the right.
The Children's Defense Fund

FIGURE 4


MISS THE WRONG PERIOD AND IT WON'T BE THE PRINCIPAL YOU'LL HAVE TO SEE.
OB/GYN Clinic
Robert Dalton M.D.
Joan C.Cole M.D.
Get pregnant and your future could go right out the door.
THE CHILDREN'S DEFENSE FUND


GET PREGNANT AND CLOTHES WON'T BE THE ONLY THING YOU CAN'T GET INTO.

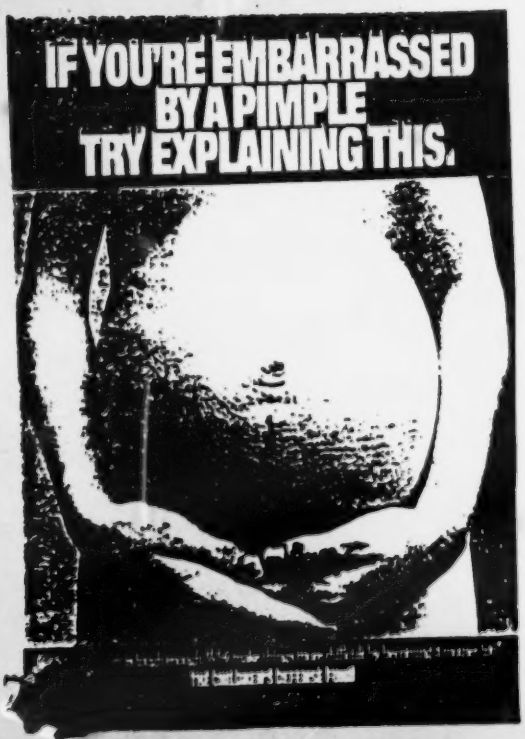

IF YOU'RE EMBARRASSED BY A PIMPLE TRY EXPLAINING THIS.

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FIGURE 5